THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
98 Weekly parts No. 33

THE MYSTIQUE OF EMPIRE
The Makers of a Victorian Mythology

Australia & New Zealand 70c South Africa 70c Canada 95c

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CONTENTS

897. The Mystique of Empire
The imperial fever at the end of the 19th Century, its ideologues and its leading practitioners.

902. Picture Essay: School for Empire
Haileybury, once the East India Company College, became a public school that preserved strong imperial associations.

906. The Study of Patriotism
The ways in which imperial feeling was extolled in education and literature.

911. Picture Essay: Victoria's "Little Paradise"
The private royal home that acquired a special place in the heart of the Queen-Empress.

919. Penny Papers: Jingo Tunes
The diffusion of imperialism through the new, sensation-seeking Press and nostalgic popular songs of the music-halls.

Cover: A carving of Victoria from West Africa shows how the Queen's pouch-eyed features personalized for her subjects the imperial government that she headed.

This crest, the Queen-Empress's own, hangs in the Houses of Parliament.

THE MYSTIQUE OF EMPIRE

During the last 30 years or so of the Victorian Age large numbers of British became conscious as never before of their imperial role. The very word "imperialism" had previously carried an unpleasant (and un-English) taint of military despotism; now it was seized on eagerly and acclaimed as the expression of an ennobling ideal.

Where the Empire had once been regarded as a political device, mainly of interest to those directly involved in its workings, it was now a hallowed birthright, a source of intoxicating mass enthusiasm that combined naïve racialism with religious dedication, thoughtful poetry with hack literature, and popular entertainment with high-minded government service.

By John Gross

The imperial fever that struck Britain at the end of the 19th Century was in many ways a sign of weakness rather than strength, a reaction to external rivalry or the fear of internal disruption. It was fear of Russian expansion towards Constantinople and Suez in 1877 that inspired the music-hall song

We don't want to fight,
But by Jingo! if we do
We've got the ships, we've got the men
And got the money too!

and introduced "jingoism" as a term for patriotic, imperialist xenophobia.

Apologists for the Raj, with memories of the Indian Mutiny still fresh in their minds, insisted on the permanent, if not positively eternal nature of the British presence in India. In 1877 the Queen was proclaimed Empress of India giving notice both to the natives and to potential interlopers (in effect, the Russians) that the British were in India to stay. And Disraeli, who had won the new title for her from Parliament, had already sensed – prematurely as it turned out – that the imperial cause could be a vote-winner if it were presented with enough theatrical flair, if it were transformed, in fact, from a strategy into a mystique.

Another new development of the 1870s was the imperial federation movement. In the course of the decade, and the one that followed, a large number of schemes were put forward, mostly by the Liberals, for binding the white colonies much more closely to the motherland by means of a federal system, before they went their own way and were beyond recall. It was widely believed that such a system was a practical possibility, now that distance had been "abolished" by the steamship and the telegraph.

The federationist case found its most forceful expression in *The Expansion of England* (1883), a set of lectures originally delivered to Cambridge undergraduates by the Professor of Modern History, Sir John Seeley, and in the writings of James Anthony Froude, notably in *Oceana* (1886). Like many federationists, Seeley took pains to dissociate himself from what he termed the "bombastic" school of imperialism: his conclusions, he claimed, were based on a

Three West African figurines of Victoria and a velvet-covered ivory throne, presented by the Maharajah of Travancore when she became Empress of India, testify to the Queen's importance to her imperial subjects as head of an otherwise remote, impersonal government.

Queen Victoria's address-case displayed the pride she felt in her new title.

sober analysis of the facts. Yet he had little to say about the concrete difficulties facing his scheme: he left out of account, for instance, the growth of colonial nationalism. In the end, his talk of imperial unity was simply an expression of faith in England's continuing world-wide mission and as such it was extremely influential.

Froude, who also seriously underrated the practical problems which would have confronted any attempt at federation, was, unlike Seeley, much preoccupied with race and with the transmission of rugged "Saxon" virtues. Among other things, this made him a determined advocate of white supremacy, so much so that while visiting South Africa he frequently took the part of the racialist Boers against the British.

It was, of course, generally true that imperialism rested on racialist assumptions, and there were those who elevated these assumptions into an ideology, the basis for which was Darwin's *Origin of Species*. With his theory of evolution through natural selection and the survival of the fittest, Darwin provided a rationale for those who believed that the existence of the Empire proved the British were selected by Nature to rule.

Others saw British superiority not as something inevitable, but as something sacred to be preserved at all costs in the face of threats from inferior races. In *National Life and Character*, C.H. Pearson argued that coloured men – especially Asiatics – could insidiously undercut and undersell white labour, which should therefore be carefully protected from non-white competition. Pearson, who had been a Minister for Education in the government of Victoria, Australia, had an immediate impact and his views were largely responsible for the adoption after 1888 of the "White Australia" policy barring non-white immigration.

Less systematic racial doctrines obtained an ever more widespread hearing. From the time of Sir Charles Dilke's *Greater Britain* (1868), for instance, it was increasingly argued that the English-speaking peoples, if they worked in unison, had it in their power to inherit the earth. Occasionally, too, the Germans were allowed to join the club – it was not just a private whim that led Cecil Rhodes to set aside a number of Rhodes scholarships for them.

Many prophets of imperialism transferred to the idea of Empire emotions which they would previously have invested in religion. As a young man Froude had first come under the influence of the High Church ritualistic Oxford Movement (although he had later been assailed by religious doubts) while Seeley, before he wrote *The Expansion of England*, was best known as the author of *Ecce Homo*, an attempt to isolate the purely human aspects of Christ's teachings. In both men, imperialism came to be as much a substitute for Christianity as a means of promoting it. And in a man like Kipling, descended on both sides of his family from Methodist ministers, it is not hard to see an Evangelical sensibility still at work after it has been almost completely severed from orthodox religious belief. Kipling's God, whoever and wherever He may be, imposes a stern and often thankless code of Duty on His Children, and in running an Empire they are essentially carrying out the Law of a quasi-religious morality.

Such a doctrine was no less powerful for being vague. At its best, it pointed to an authentic tradition of devotion and service; at its worst the portentous capital letters suggested a rhetorical smoke-screen, and the Law could sound ominously like the law of the jungle – or the law of natural selection.

The men who actually ran the Empire also contributed to the development of the mystique. The late Victorian and early 20th-Century imperial governors – or "proconsuls" as they liked to term themselves – had a lofty sense of their own calling, not only Cromer, Curzon and Milner, to cite the most famous, but the hundreds of lesser lights – above all in India – of the administrative élite.

Reforms after the 1857 Mutiny transformed the Indian administration from a private guild under the East India Company into a public institution under the Crown. Though sons still followed their fathers into what was now the Imperial Civil Service, and family tradition remained a powerful factor influencing

those who opted for an Indian career, suitable connections were no longer enough: brains, and an ability to do well in examinations, were also necessary. Increasingly, too, the university began to replace the school as the immediate formative influence.

At first, candidates were selected at 18 or 19 and then sent to a university for a shortened course; subsequently the practice was for them to take a first examination at the end of their undergraduate careers and then spend a further year acquiring a knowledge of Indian law, one of the major Indian languages and kindred topics, after which they had to face the examiners once again. The all-important preliminary examination, however – and it was a stiff one – covered a wide range of standard subjects, from Natural Sciences to Ancient History, with candidates allowed to take as many papers as they chose. In practice the "competition wallah," as the old East Indian Company hands dubbed him, had usually had a classical training, as often as not at Oxford. Balliol, in particular, under the guidance of Benjamin Jowett, became an outstanding intellectual incubator for future Anglo-Indian officials.

Apart from possible family ties, what was it that persuaded men who could have enjoyed highly successful careers at home to spend their working lives in India? A certain adventurousness, no doubt, social prestige, the chance to exercise power – and, not least, extremely good rates of pay. But at the same time it would be a great mistake to make light of the professional pride and sense of satisfaction which went with the job. Most members of the I.C.S. were exceptionally hard-working, conscientious and dedicated to their communal ideals, and it is here that their academic training was important. The actual details of administration they mostly learned as they went along (it was official policy to throw newcomers in at the deep end after a few weeks in India), but from their élitist education they had imbibed, almost without thinking about it, a picture of themselves as a superior caste, charged with the duty of preserving civilization in India and uniquely well qualified for the task. They were "the Guardians," as the author and former Indian Civil Service official Philip Woodruff calls them, borrowing the term from Plato's account of his ideal, self-perpetuating aristocracy.

This, too, was a racialist view, though with the highest motives. No longer was the dominant spirit one of innovation and reform, as it had been in the last 20 years of Company rule. Now, instead, the policy was far more one of let-well-alone, with a confident belief in progress giving way to a bureaucratic preference for established methods. The new justification of British rule was not so much helping India to catch up as saving India from herself. In the words of Sir John Strachey, one of the ablest administrators of the late Victorian period, "we cannot foresee the time in which the cessation of our rule would not be the signal for universal anarchy and ruin, and it is clear that the only hope for India is the long continuance of the benevolent but strong government of Englishmen." And while there is no reason to doubt that this is what men like Strachey honestly believed, the effect of such a creed, especially when expressed in such drastic terms, was to erect the *status quo* into a law of nature, with the implicit assumption that somehow Indians were innately deficient in the capacity for self-government. Technically there was no racial barrier, and a few natives began to find their way into the service from the 1860s and 1870s, but as late as 1919 there were still less than 80 of them out of a force numbering nearly 1,200: the I.C.S. came to embody a much-resented brake on Indian aspirations.

The Colonial Service, which supplied officials to imperial areas outside India, was a much less august, much less tightly organized affair. There were no qualifying examinations, and before 1910 not even a token course of pre-Service training: candidates were selected by interview, with a premium on "soundness" rather than academic prowess (and, as numbers began to expand, with particular weight being attached to headmasters' testimonials). Although a wide variety of other territories came under its supervision, the Service primarily dealt with Africa, where at the end of the 19th Century imperialism was still more aptly symbolized by the soldier, explorer or pioneer than by the administrator ❧

Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby in the early 19th Century, owed his reputation as the founder of the Victorian public-school system and its ideals to his earnestness. One of his Oxford contemporaries joked that Arnold invented the word "earnest," for he, more than anyone, brought earnestness, the hall-mark of the rising Evangelical movement, into the public schools, those nurseries of statesmen and colonial governors.

In 1828 the Trustees of Rugby were looking for a reforming but solid headmaster. The school itself and society as a whole demanded it. The public schools, Rugby included, were in decline. Open war between masters and boys, savage bullying, and blatant homosexuality were arousing adverse publicity. At one school, boys once lashed pedestrians with whips.

Socially, too, it was an anxious time. The Industrial Revolution was gathering pace. A newly wealthy, ambitious middle class was threatening the traditional power of the gentry. Materialist ideas propounded by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill were gaining ground.

In Rugby's Chapel (left), Arnold preached the

Dr. Arnold and the Victorian Character

Arnold, it seemed, was the man for the job. Reformist, but not radical, he was suitably intolerant towards these revolutionary forces. "I would give James Mill as much opportunity for advocating his opinion," he declared, "as is consistent with a voyage to Botany Bay."

Arnold also represented one of Victorian Britain's most powerful movements: Evangelical religion. His background gave him a suitable foundation for the dedication demanded by this proselytizing Christianity. He came from a serious-minded family, so serious, in fact, that his father, a customs officer, presented him on his third birthday with Smollett's *History of England* in 24 volumes. His education had been a model of diligence, culminating in a Fellowship at Oriel College, Oxford. He had spent ten years in the Church of England and in the year of his new appointment, 1828, became a Doctor of Divinity.

Arnold, now aged 33, was already a formidable figure, sure of his ground. His answer to indiscipline and outdated curricula at Rugby was godliness and good learning, with good learning a clear second: apart from introducing a little maths and history, he did very little to shift the curriculum's centre of gravity away from Latin and Greek prose.

His message for Rugby was really very simple: moral purification. He saw the school as one great temple, but "ye have made it a den of thieves," he told the boys quoting St. Luke. Like Christ clearing the money-lenders out of the Temple in Jerusalem, Arnold planned to extirpate all evil from Rugby.

Taking the existing prefect system, he strengthened it as a task force for godliness. He glamorized the sermon as a heartfelt call to godliness. He wielded his great and solemn personality as a weapon of godliness. In everything he hammered home his conviction that education and religion were essentially one in the search for moral good. The reform of Rugby should be a first step towards his ideal society where Church and State were identical. In other words, Rugby, the temple of God, should be a pattern for the whole nation.

Arnold achieved only a limited success before his death in 1842. As Thomas Hughes recorded in his novel about the school, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, the temple still had an element of the thieves' den about it, even if it was now able to "turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman and a gentleman and a Christian." Arnold's enduring success came later. When the more pious boys from Rugby went up to Oxford, they created a stir by actually enjoying chapel. Several became headmasters and moulded other public schools into the Arnold image, and middle-class parents enrolled their sons in ever-increasing numbers in such newly respectable public schools. They now conformed with the Evangelically moral character of 19th-Century Britain. The fertile union of public schools and parents reinforced the cultural domination of the middle classes.

Though godliness in time was displaced by the late Victorian ideal of manliness, the steadfast pursuit of high ideals remained a central feature at home and among administrators of the Empire.

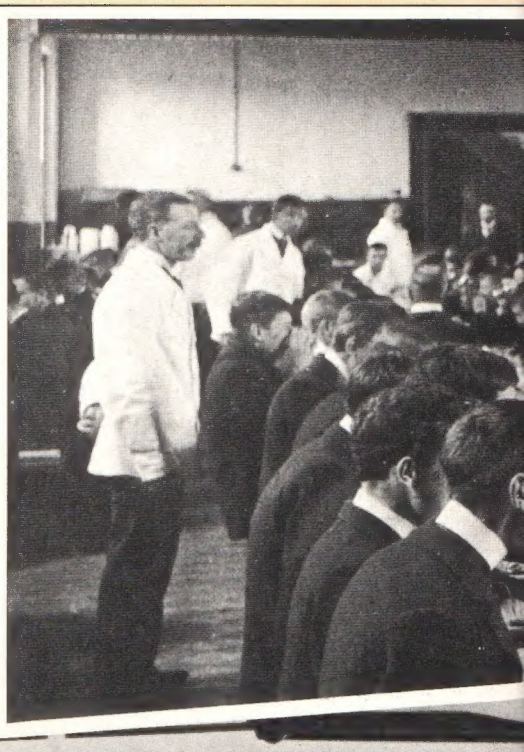
high-minded Christianity that was the basis of the Victorian public-school ethic.

Arnold's piercing glance made an impression of "extreme fear" on the boys.

SCHOOL FOR EMPIRE

The public schools, with their emphasis on Character, Manliness and Sport, embodied the essence of the imperial ethic. Of all the public schools, Haileybury had the closest connections with Empire. It was founded 1809 as the East India Company College; then, in 1862, after the Company had been taken over by the Crown, the College was reconstituted as an independent school. Through a curriculum that combined classical study and practical Christianity, the future guardians of the Empire – most of them boys from solidly middle-class families – were taught the ideals of dedicated, disinterested service.

When these photographs of the school were taken near the turn of the century, the tradition of imperial service was still strong – the tradition of "the thoroughbred Anglo Indian, whose blood," in the words of one Anglo-Indian commentator, "has distilled through Haileybury for three generations and whose cousins to the fourth degree are Collectors and Indian Army colonels."



Pitchers of cold water outside the dormitory cubicles reflect the spartan existence that was supposed to toughen the mind and body of those who were to hold the reins of power at home and throughout the Empire.

Pupils in the dining-room – Haileybury had "a name among schools for plain feeding" – were supervised by the waiters and masters, who made sure that boys did not "practise any ungentlemanly trick."

The study – crowded with pictures, maps and souvenirs of the pupils – were usually shared: a study of one's own was a coveted privilege of prefects.

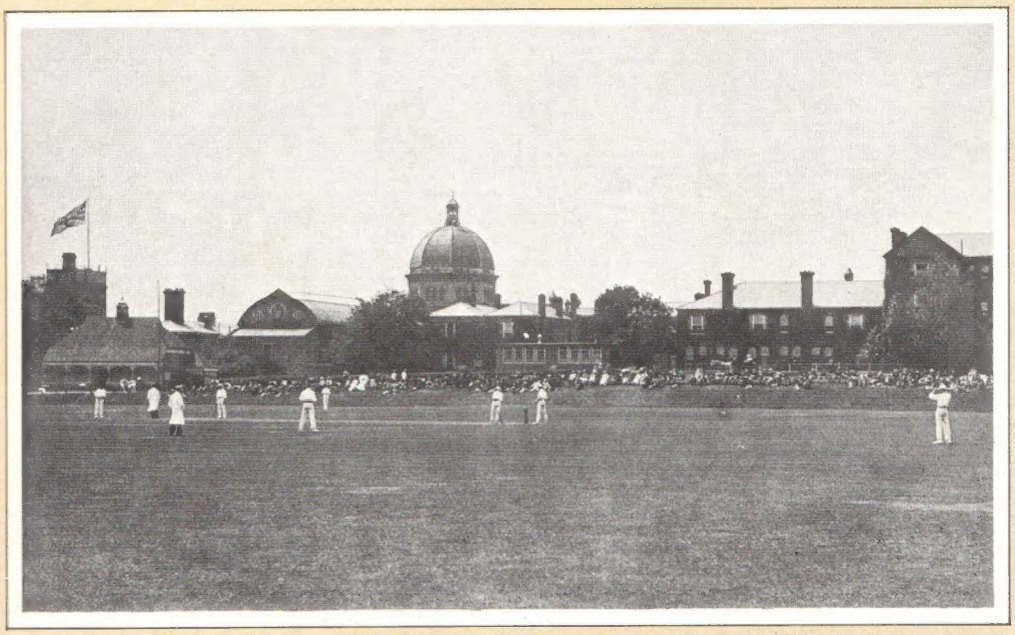
Learning to Play the Game of Life

The ideal schoolboy did not have to be academically bright, but if he had "grit" if he was a "sport," if he believed in his country, he would soon learn to respect and use authority.

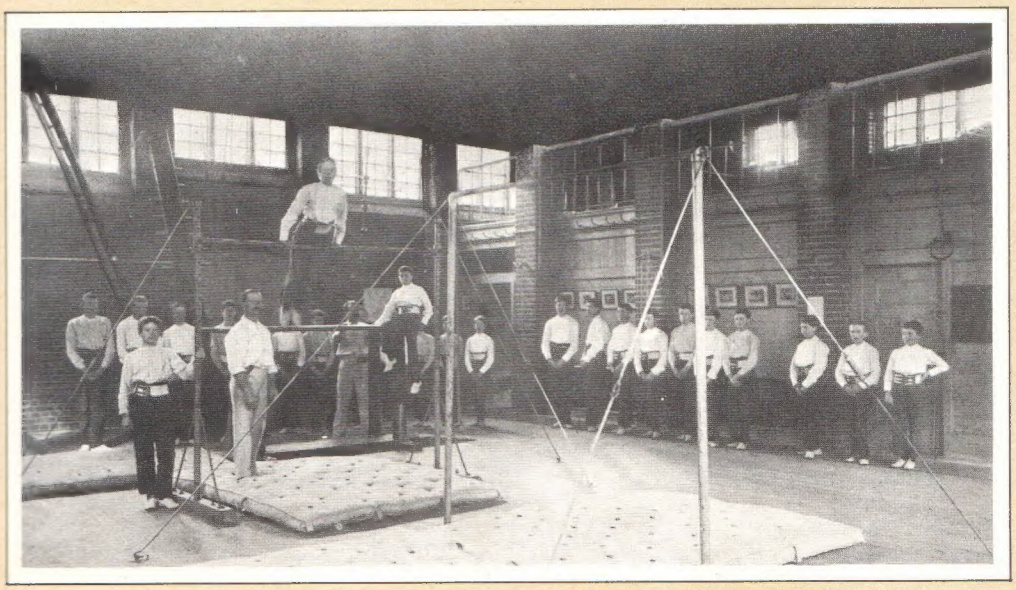
As a fag in his first few terms he learned to submit; as a prefect he learned to rule, in accordance with the system established by Dr. Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby, who in the 1830s increased the authority held by the schoolboys themselves. As the historian and politician George Otto Trevelyan wrote: "The real education of a civil servant consists in the responsibility that devolves on him at an early age."

On the playing-field, the public schoolboy learned the importance of teamwork and fair play. "It would be terrible to think what would happen to us if from our public school system were swept away our Athletics and our Games," said Eustace Mile, amateur tennis champion of the world in 1899 – an apt sentiment from one who also believed that the best proof of a man's fitness to rule India was to have been Captain of Games at school.

These were the traditions that built up the unshakable belief among Victorian public schoolboys that the British held a God-given monopoly of wise rule, the traditions that created, in Trevelyan's words, "the fire of zeal which glows in every vein of an Indian official." The traditions were remarkably long-lasting: self-perpetuating public school élites at Oxford and Cambridge, in government and in the City, are still influential.



"Cricket," says someone in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, "is the birthright of boys." At Haileybury, as at other schools, the mystique of the game was ingrained for life.



Even during gym, Haileyburians preserved decorum by adhering to the rule: "bare legs are not exposed at all either in athletic competitions or in ordinary games."

Prefects formed a responsible élite who upheld the ideals of the school by example and authority. This was reinforced by a carefully maintained system of privileges, which gave them hot water in the mornings and exemption from some punishments.

The College cadet force was an expression of the patriotic traditions common to all public schools, seedbeds for the officer class.

II. The Study of Patriotism

It was the men of the I.C.S., therefore, who were the vanguard of the imperial ethic. They wrote copiously, and they presented themselves as "pro-consuls" – guardians of a sacred trust, master-builders of civilization. The word "pro-consul" reinforced the echoes of Roman grandeur that were meant to be stirred by the official language of imperialism, and comparisons between Britain and Rome were commonplace throughout the late Victorian period.

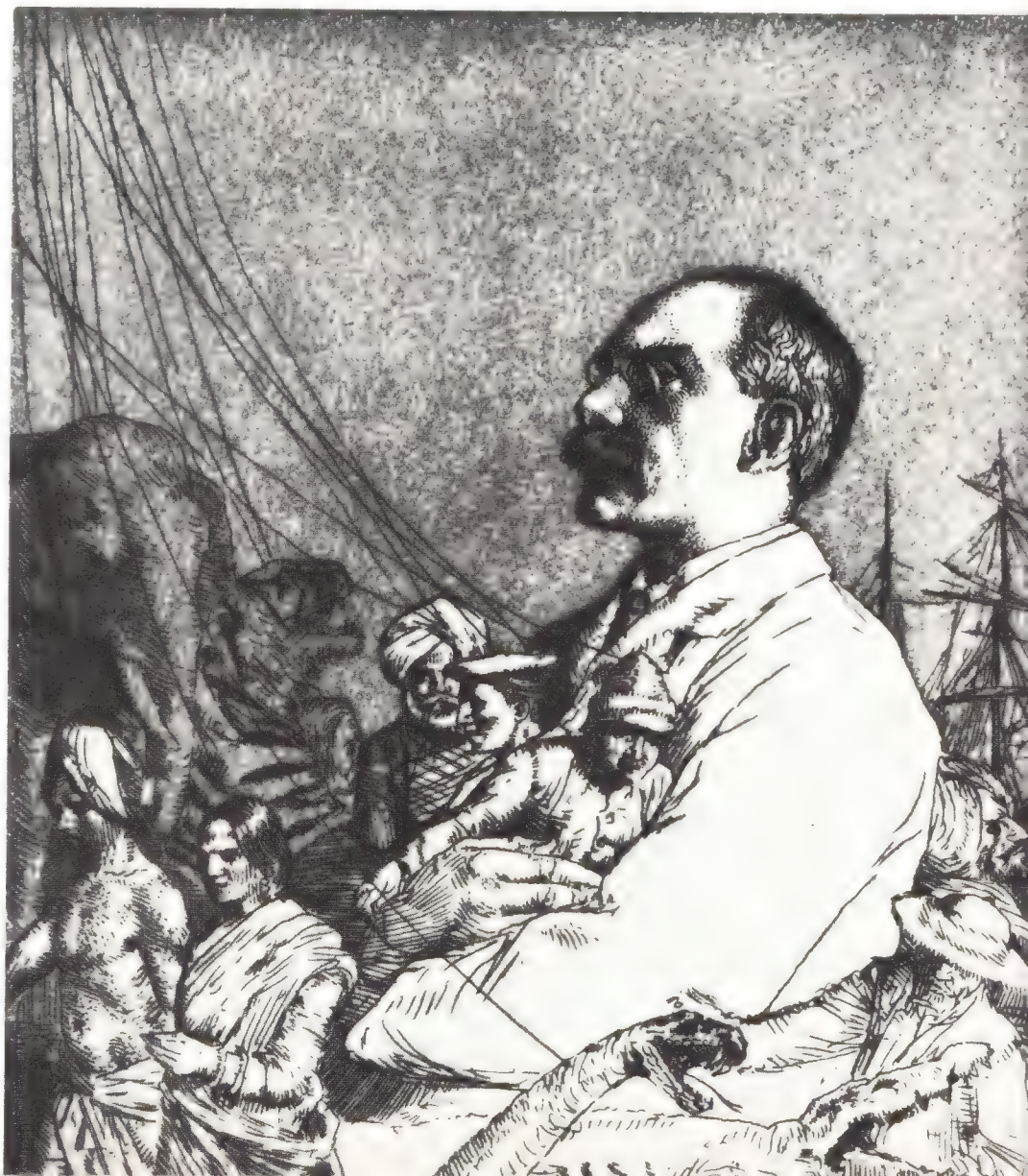
But the Roman Empire, in its time, had stood alone; the British, as the 19th Century wore on, was increasingly only one among a group of competing empires, each with its own characteristic version of the imperial credo. The spirit of imperialism was abroad in many countries and under many guises, ranging from the *mission civilisatrice* of the French to the *Weltpolitik* of the Germans, from the sabre-rattling of William Randolph Hearst's newspapers to the mystical Pan-Slavism of Dostoevsky.

As senior practitioners, the British prophets of Empire generally enjoyed an advantage when it came to the exchange of ideas. Kipling was far better known in France than any of his French counterparts were in England; the historical theories of Seeley or the geopolitics of Sir Halford Mackinder were studied more earnestly in Germany than they ever were at home. But in a looser way the international climate undoubtedly fortified English imperialists in their conviction that they were right both from the immediate standpoint of British self-interest and in their basic reading of human nature. And if they saw their more formidable rivals, especially the Germans, gaining economic and industrial ground at their expense, they could comfort themselves with the thought that no other empire was likely to approach theirs in size and diversity.

For the most part the outside pressures and the lofty ideals of the I.C.S. had only a marginal influence on popular attitudes. Foreign politics were remote from the interests of the young and the I.C.S. only numbered about 1,000 active members. The imperial mystique was kept going by its own momentum. Education, propaganda and popular culture drummed in the message, colouring attitudes from early childhood onwards and ensuring the correct responses.

A special part in this was reserved for the public schools. With the Indian Civil Service thrown open to entrance by examination, and with the growth of a Colonial Service, one of the prime functions of the public schools was now unmistakably the shaping of an administrative caste. Not that this had any very direct effect on what they taught or the way they were run. Future administrators prepared themselves for their qualifying examinations later, at the university or at a crammer. It was a question, rather, of the whole public-school ethos as it had evolved by the late Victorian period, with its emphasis on manliness (where an earlier generation had stressed godliness), on character (as opposed, all too often, to intellectual ability), and on sport, on submission, on authority. As an old boy, the former pupil inherited a set of enduring loyalties. And the values of the public-school code constituted the working philosophy of most servants of the Empire: as E.M. Forster says in *A Passage to India*, they were designed never to go bad, "even in the tropics." Despite the official trappings and insignia, the most potent emblems of the imperial creed were the stiff upper lip, the straight bat and the old school tie.

The public schools, though intended to turn out gentlemen in general rather than Empire-builders in particular, helped form the imperial outlook and the Empire in turn increasingly gave them their rationale. Headmasters tended to make a cult of patriotism for, although the chapel and the sermon were still an essential part of school routine, religion was no longer the driving force that it had been for Arnold of Rugby and his 1830s contemporaries. Sometimes patriotism meant more than pious uplift: in 1900, for example, the Headmaster of Eton, Dr. Warre, urged the government, without success, to insist that the public schools gave their boys six months' worth of compulsory military training.



Distinguished visitors, too, waxed eloquent on the imperial theme. It was an address given to the boys at Eton by one of the most redoubtable of Anglo-Indian officials, the Colonial Under-Secretary Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, that first kindled in the ambitious young Curzon, future Viceroy of India, a sense of his own destiny. Half a century after the Canadian imperialist George Parkin had lectured at Harrow, Winston Churchill and Leopold Amery could both recall word for word his appeal to the English sense of duty as he compared the rallying-cry of imperial federation and Nelson's signal at Trafalgar. And as an example of what had come to be expected of public-school products by the Edwardian Age, the historian of Wellington College, David Newsome, cites a speech made by Lord Rosebery at the Wellington Jubilee Dinner in 1909: "There are encroaching opinions which threaten patriotism, menace our love of country, and imply the relaxation, if not the destruction, of all the bonds which hold our Empire together (*hear, hear*). I would urge that as far as possible the study of patriotism be promoted (*cheers*). If this is done daily and sedulously in this College it will live up to the conditions of its foundation and the illustrious auspices under which it has hitherto done its work (*cheers*)."

The literature of public-school life enshrined the same fierce conviction. In Horace Annesley Vachell's *The Hill* (1905), a classic specimen of the public-school story, the exemplary Desmond is first licked into shape by Harrow and then, after enlisting in the Army, goes off to lay down his life on the South African veld. There were poets, too, anxious to celebrate the link between school and Empire. The best known of them, Sir Henry Newbolt, often wrote as though the most fundamental purpose of a public-school education was to prepare boys, if necessary, for the supreme sacrifice. In his poem *Clifton Chapel*, the Old Cliftonian father, after showing his son round the grounds and instructing him that

> *Henceforth the School and you are one,*
> *And what You are, the race shall be,*

holds up as his crowning ideal a soldier's death on a faraway frontier. In *He Fell among Thieves*, the young officer who is about to be killed by marauding tribesmen recalls "the School Close, sunny and green" and his early athletic triumphs,

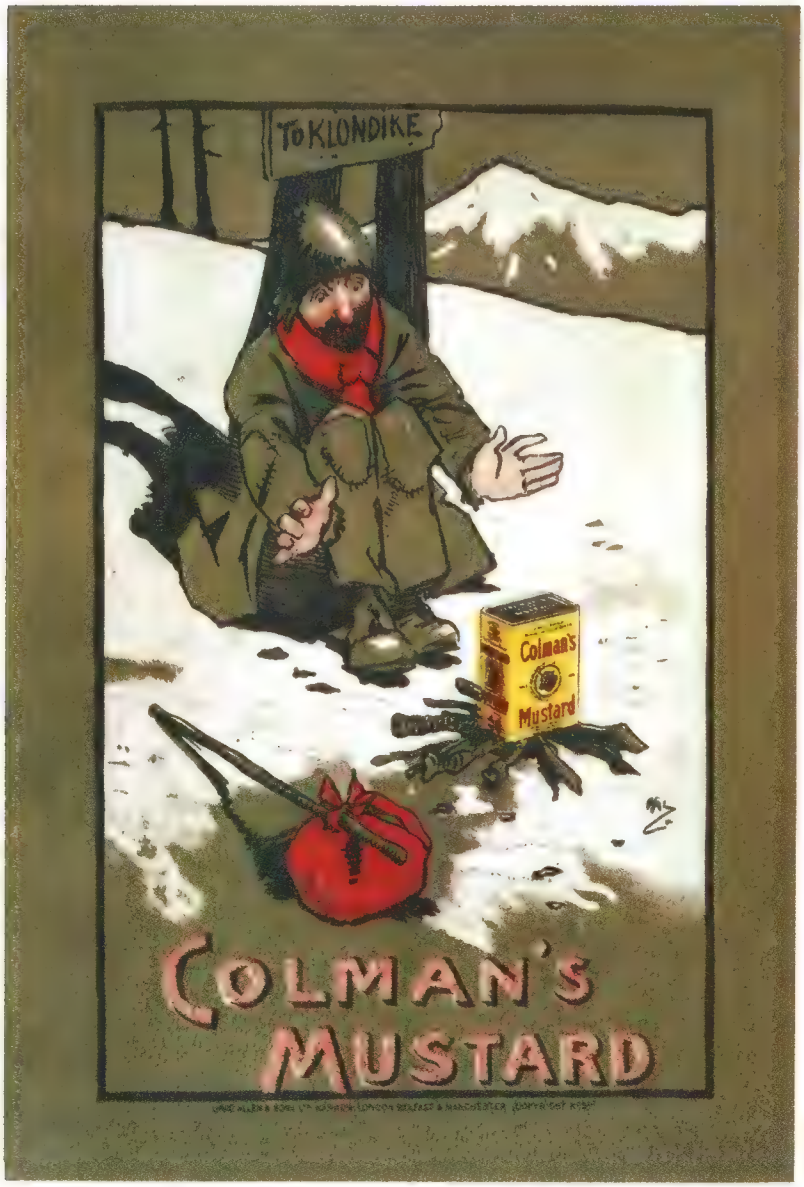
continued on p. 910

Rudyard Kipling, portrayed (left) among a cluster of characters from his books, was the imperial writer of his day, catching the mood of British jingoism as well as many hidden complexities of imperial attitudes. His last books were written in the study (above) at his house, Bateman's, in Sussex, where he lived after years of wandering in the East.

THE MYTH EXPLOITED

A heavily rigged merchantman appeals to the seafaring traditions of Britain's commercial Empire.

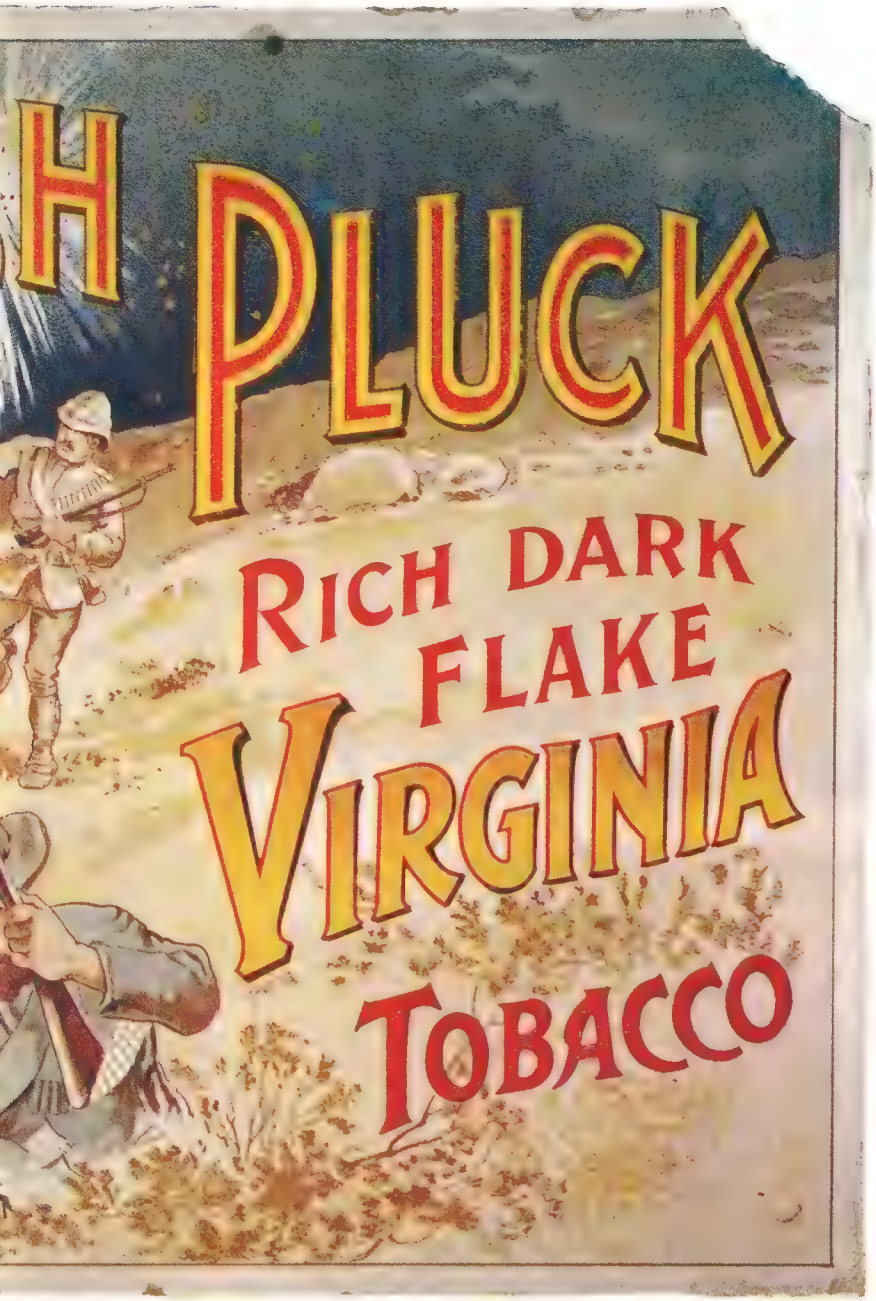
For advertisers, the turn-of-the-century fad for all things imperial was a god-send. The Empire was a permanent source of second-hand excitement, a stage-show of exploration and warfare with all suffering either romanticized or removed. In the clichés suggested by "Queen, Empire and British Character," manufacturers had ideal material: dramatic, colourful and flattering to patriotic self-esteem.



The heat of a spicy mustard warms a frozen gold-prospector – who has more in common with an English tramp than with his real-life counterparts.

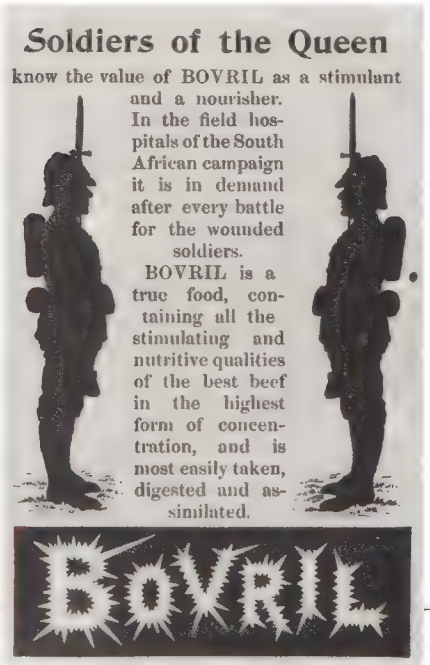
An unlikely deed of derring-do promotes the trade-name of a tobacco.

For "specially appointed" manufacturers, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee of 1897 provided unique material for a soft sell.

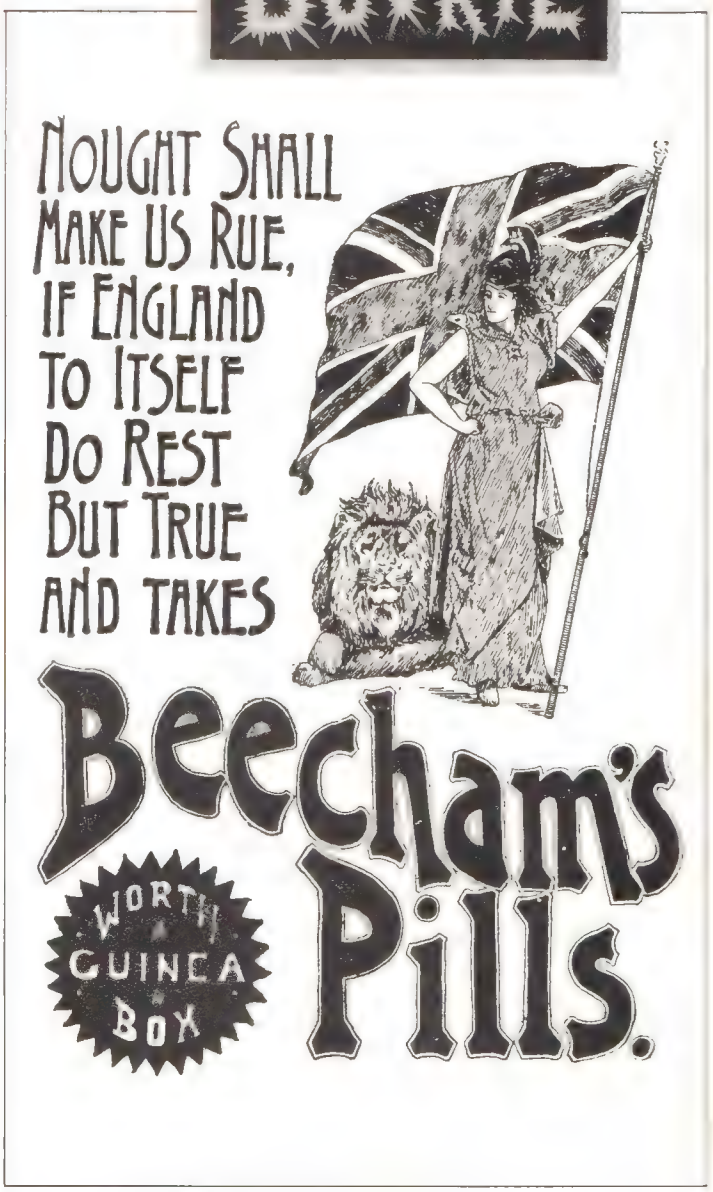


In fact, the British seldom fought the Boer guerrillas with swords.

Letters exploding like shrapnel and a mention of "wounded soldiers" could only appeal to a public whose romantic attitudes were as yet untouched by the horrors of war.



Nelson had been dead for almost a century, but in the jingoistic atmosphere of the 1890s his was still a name to conjure with.



The association of a mundane product with pompous text evoking England's greatness by hindsight seems endearingly comic.

while in the dire situation described in *Vitaï Lampada* –

The sand of the desert is sodden and red . . .
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead

– the broken ranks are rallied by a boyish cry of

Play up! play up! and play the game

Even at the time, and even among the ranks of professed imperialists, there must have been many who found it hard to keep a straight face. And yet Newbolt's melodramatics, however lurid, do point to an authentic aspect of the imperial outlook, the quality which made Anglo-Indians talk of the struggle for mastery in central Asia as "the Great Game" or which led the American philosopher George Santayana to describe the 19th-Century Englishman as "the schoolboy master of the world."

Inevitably adventure stories for boys also followed the flag. The unrivalled master here was G.A. Henty, who between 1870 and his death in 1902 turned out over 80 sagas of juvenile pluck. Henty himself led an adventurous life, mainly as a foreign correspondent, which took in the Crimean War, the campaigns of Garibaldi and the Paris Commune as well as various imperial excursions, and his interests were by no means as exclusively red, white and blue as is often supposed: as a story-teller his subjects include the machine-wrecking Luddites of the 19th Century and Carthaginians and the Russian nihilists. But it was imperial history which proved the inexhaustible quarry. Without preaching any high-flown political lessons, he implied that the Empire was the most natural setting for displays of valour, such as this episode from *With Clive in India*:

"For a moment when the guns opened there was confusion and panic among the British troops. Clive, however, ever cool and confident in danger, and well seconded by his officers, rallied them at once. The position was one of extreme danger. It was possible, indeed, to retreat, but in the face of an enemy superior in infantry and guns, and possessing so powerful a body of cavalry, the operation would have been a very dangerous one. Even if accomplished it would entail an immense loss of *morale* and prestige to his troops. Hitherto under his leading they had been always successful, and a belief in his own superiority adds immensely to the fighting power of a soldier. Even should the remnant of the force fight its way back to Madras the campaign would have been a lost one, and all hope of saving Trichinopoli would have been at an end.

"'Steady, lads, steady,' he shouted. 'Form up quietly and steadily. We have beaten the enemy before, you know, and we will do so again.'

"'Now, lads,' Charlie Marryat cried to the company of which he was in command, 'stick to it. You ought to be very thankful to the French for saving you the trouble of having to march another twelve miles before giving you an opportunity of thrashing them.'

"The men laughed and redoubled their fire on the French infantry."

The very titles of Henty's books constitute a miniature imperial gazetteer, punctuated by appropriate battle-cries: *With Clive in India, St. George for England, Maori and Settler, By Right of Conquest, With Wolfe in Canada, The Dash for Khartoum.* A Henty hero might equally well expect to find himself *On the Irrawaddy* or *Under Wellington's Command.* In *For Name and Fame* he accompanies Roberts to Kabul; and although one of Henty's many imitators, Captain Brereton, was first off the mark *With Roberts to Kandahar,* Henty regained his customary lead *With Roberts in Pretoria.* (Another up-to-the-minute Henty drama of the Boer War took place *With Buller in Natal.*) These tales would not be as readable as they are if Henty had not stuck, almost literally, to his guns. He was preoccupied with the deeds that won the Empire rather than the men who administered it; and needless to say, neither he nor his readers were greatly concerned with the economic underpinnings of imperialism. As one critic has wittily observed: "he never took a hopeful lad *With Barnato to the Diamond Diggings* or celebrated *A Venture in Argentine Rails.*"

Many of Henty's stories first saw the light in the pages of such papers as *Chums, The Captain,* the *Union Jack* (which he helped to edit) and the *Boy's Own Paper,* the legendary "B.O.P." From about 1880 magazines like these found their way into countless middle-class homes. Unlike their predecessors, the penny dreadfuls, they were generally approved of by parents, and one sure pledge of their respectability was the amount of space they gave to stories with an imperial slant. Where Sweeney Todd and Spring-Heeled Jack had once held sway there were now tales of desperate odds in Matabeleland and carnage among the Ashanti. It was a sign of the times, too, that by the end of the century the happy-go-lucky and immensely popular Jack Harkaway, who had been coping with miscellaneous pirates, bandits and redskins for over a generation, should at last turn up fighting for the flag, in the Transvaal. Such stories were meant to be enjoyed, not to win converts, and it would be misguided to take them too solemnly; at the same time, who can say how much they did to shape their readers' underlying picture of the world as a place largely dominated by the British and their Empire?

Perhaps the most significant, and certainly the most highly respected, "imperialist" writer was Kipling. He was however a more complicated figure than popular legend suggests: the Anglo-Indian stories with which he first made his name were as much cynical as heroic, while many of his admirers must have found his later work disappointingly cryptic or oblique. But he was also a publicist of genius, with an unsurpassed knack of coining catch-phrases and investing his fables with a cartoon-like pungency. *If –, The White Man's Burden, What do they know of England . . .* and a score of other poems rapidly became part of the folklore of imperialism, as near to tribal lays as anything the period can show. Nor was it simply a question of exhortations and rousing appeals. Even more important, in poems like *The Overland Mail* Kipling made the routine existence of the Empire seem interesting and momentous as never before.

Victoria's "Little Paradise"

Osborne House Isle of Wight

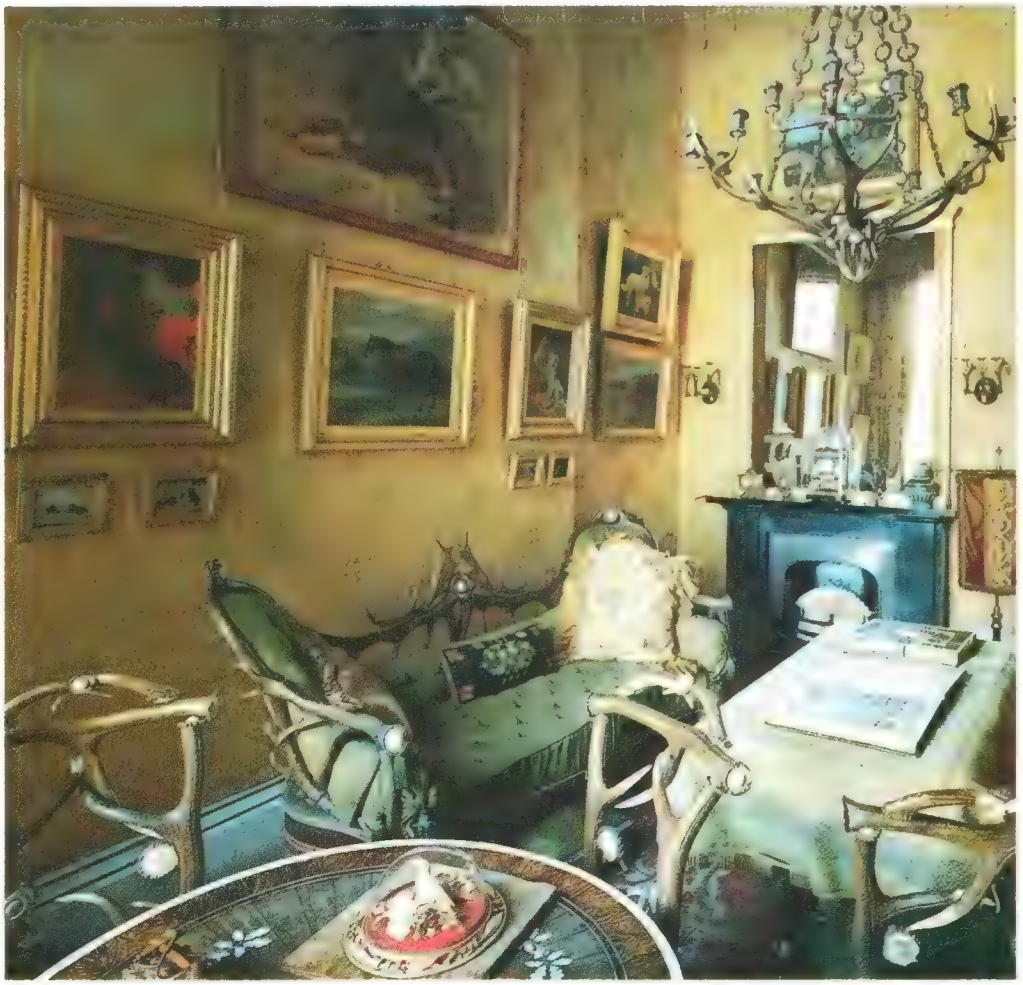
In search of privacy, a place "quiet and retired," Queen Victoria and Prince Albert discovered Osborne, an 800-acre estate near East Cowes on the Isle of Wight, that guaranteed seclusion for their private life. The existing building was demolished and a new one, Osborne House, built in its place to Albert's own Italianate design. Though few could afford to build in the Osborne manner, the contents of the house still reflect the Queen's taste for mementoes and bric-à-brac, a taste that was copied by loyal subjects from Balham to Bangalore.

The principal corridor of the Household Wing is filled with marble copies of classical statues and busts of the Royal Family.

A Prince's Creation

The Queen bought the original Osborne in 1845 for £26,000. It was a charming 18th-Century building, but clearly too small for a growing family – four of the nine Royal children were born by then. Prince Albert engaged Thomas Cubitt, the famous London builder, to turn his vision of an Italian palace into reality.

The first section, known as the "Pavilion Wing," containing living quarters for the Royal Family, was ready in September, 1846, but it took five more years before the building was complete. In order to make the mansion fireproof, Cubitt incorporated cast-iron beams into its construction. Albert, with his characteristic thoroughness, was not content simply with designing the house. He supervised the decoration of its elaborate interiors and further displayed his skilful use of space by the creation of Renaissance-style terraces, walks and gardens in the extensive grounds.



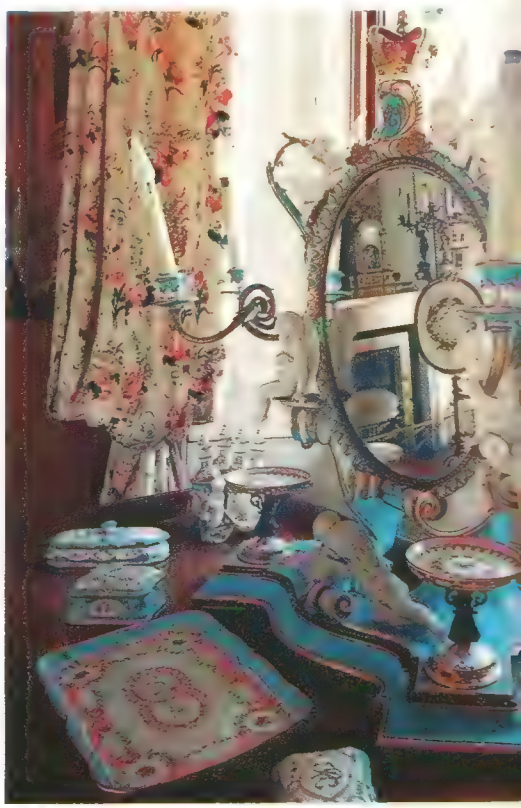
When Queen Victoria ordered antler furniture from Germany for the Horn Room she inadvertently set a bizarre fashion widely copied in late Victorian England.

At the foot of the Grand Staircase stands a statue of Queen Victoria in classical style. On the right is a bust of Prince Albert.

A Model Marriage

The Royal couple allowed no grandeur to intrude into their private apartments – even though the need for State rooms to fulfill the demands of protocol compelled them to spend £20,000 on a more palatial retreat than they had intended. With paintings, chintz and mementoes they created the snug surroundings they had dreamed of. The Queen's taste, however, was considerably less restrained than Albert's. While he furnished his study with an almost austere simplicity she cluttered her graceful sitting-room with furniture, paintings, photographs and objects of every description.

This divergence of taste apart, their union was remarkably successful. The closeness of their marriage – symbolized by the double desk used by them both – was revered as a model by middle-class couples who strove to emulate the rectitude of the Royal way of life.



Victoria's dressing-room table displays the looking-glass and toilet articles of Minton china that Prince Albert gave her in 1853.

The Queen spent long hours writing at her sitting-room table. Albert presented memoranda, letters and reports for her inspection from her left and she would summon equerries and servants with bell-pushes set into her own desk next to the right-hand table leg.

A Widow's Retreat

With the exception of Highland holidays at Balmoral, the Queen and Prince Albert spent their happiest hours at Osborne. Life was so informal – one of their favourite pastimes was to listen to nightingales on a summer evening – and the climate so relaxing at their "sweet, peaceful little abode" that the Royal Family went there several times a year.

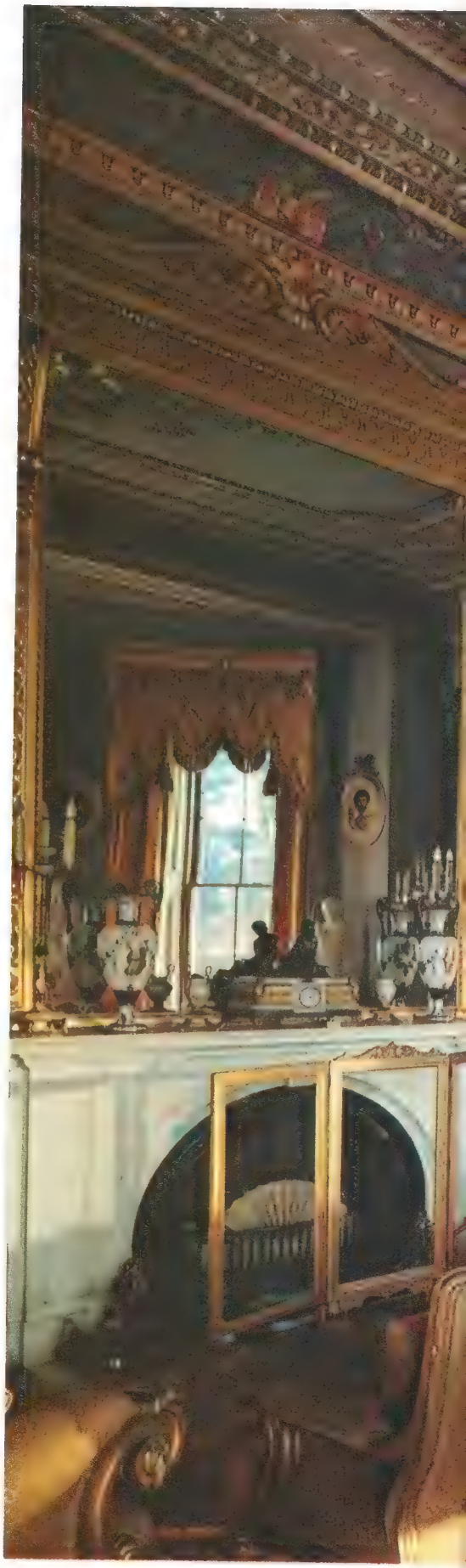
It was at Osborne, in 1847, that the Queen took her first dip in the sea. Recording the experience in her *Journal* she wrote: "I thought it delightful until I put my head under the water, when I thought I should be stifled."

There were also many delights for the children at Osborne but perhaps none more popular than the substantial playhouse called the "Swiss Cottage." Here the princes learned carpentry and gardening, and their sisters the essentials of housekeeping and cookery. In its dining-room they had their parents to tea.

"How happy we are here!" wrote the Queen in 1849, "And never do I enjoy myself more or more peacefully than when I can be so much with my beloved Albert." It was not to last.

When her great happiness was destroyed with Albert's death in 1861, it was to Osborne that the desolate Queen retired to tend the flame of his memory. Comforted in her grief by surroundings that recalled some of their happiest moments together, the Queen altered little in the house and grounds during 40 years of widowhood. She died at Osborne on January 22, 1901.

Albert, an avid billiards-player, designed the elaborate decoration of this billiards-table. It was lit by oil-lamps until electricity was introduced into Osborne in about 1890.



Like the adjoining billiards-room, the State Drawing-Room, where visitors were received, was decorated with imitation marble coloumns. Throughout the room are life-size marble statues of the Royal children as Peace, Plenty, and the Seasons. On the right is Prince Alfred, as Autumn.

he Durbar Room at Osborne, built in the
ges for large receptions, was an imposing
monstration of the Queen-Empress's
eoccupation with her Indian Empire. It
as built by Rudyard Kipling's father, John
ckwood, Keeper of the Museum in Lahore.

III. Penny Papers, Jingo Tunes

It would be hard to say whether Kipling was read more avidly by adults or children – and in this he resembles many lesser story-tellers among his contemporaries. The years of his prime were also the heyday of swashbuckling romantic fiction "for boys of all ages," often with imperialist overtones if not an explicitly imperialist content. The most notable example, unless we count Kipling himself, was his friend Sir Henry Rider Haggard, whose popularity dates from the resounding success of *King Solomon's Mines* (1885). Haggard had served in Africa in the 1870s, and taken part in the temporary annexation of the Transvaal in 1877. He was hostile to the Boers, and sentimentally attached – up to a point – to the Zulus: his African stories have been described as "the epic of a dying people." Best not to inquire too closely, perhaps, into the reasons why they were dying – and one effect of Haggard's writing, though it was not necessarily his intention, was to draw a veil of romance and high adventure over a part of the world that had become the scene of some distinctly sordid transactions.

The one subsequent African romance to rival or even outstrip Rider Haggard in popularity was Edgar Wallace's *Sanders of the River*. Wallace had covered the Boer War as a newspaperman, but by the time the Sanders stories began to appear, in 1909, much of the fictional glamour had departed from South Africa, and he chose West Africa for his locale instead. Mr. Commissioner Sanders deals out rough justice in an unspecified tropical territory, "three hundred miles beyond the fringe of civilisation." As long as he can treat the natives like children, he is prepared to think well of them, but "the browny men of the Gold Coast, who talked English, wore European clothing, and called one another 'Mr.,' were his pet abomination"; he also despises professional humanitarians, outside interference, and the kid-glove tactics of Mr. Commissioner Niceman. He is, in short, a schoolboy's dream of the strong paternalistic man on the spot, and as one would expect, his methods are always successful.

One name which must be mentioned in even the sketchiest account of literary imperialism is that of the crippled poet W.E. Henley. During the 1890s two or three of Henley's poems, such as the ecstatic *Pro Rege Nostro* –

> *What have I done for you,*
> *England, my England?*

achieved an almost Kiplingesque impact, but it was as an editor and promoter of other men's work that he exerted his most effective influence. Kipling and Rider Haggard were both among the writers who owed him a good deal at an early stage in their careers; his weekly paper, the *National Observer*, was a leading imperialist forum; and in *Lyra Heroica*, his anthology of poems for boys, he produced one of the standard texts of a generation eager for its children to grow up enthralled by tunes of glory.

Few of these imperialist writers were actively involved in promoting imperial policies or organizations. But in the life of one man, Lord Robert Baden-Powell – "B.P." – love of Empire was expressed in words and deeds that still absorb young people. "B.P.", a magical set of initials, also stands for "Be Prepared," the motto of the Boy Scout movement which he founded in 1907. Although the movement was formally non-political, it was only so in the sense that the Empire was meant to be above politics, and there can be no mistaking its imperial origins. "Be Prepared" had also been the motto of the South African Constabulary, and Baden Powell's pep-talks, such as the "Camp Fire Yarns" in *Scouting for Boys*, leave no doubt about how passionately devoted he was to saving the Empire from the fate which waits on decadence.

The intertwined initials of Victoria and Albert at Osborne celebrate their loving union.

"Our great Empire," he wrote, "is today to the rest of the world very much what the Roman Empire was two thousand years ago. But the Roman Empire, great as it was, fell.

"'The same causes which brought about the fall of the great Roman Empire are working today in Great Britain.'

"These words were lately spoken by one of our best-known democratic politicians. That they are true is practically admitted by those who have studied and compared the general conditions of both countries . . .

"Recent reports on the deterioration of our race ought to act as a warning to be taken in time before it goes too far.

"One cause which contributed to the downfall of the Roman Empire was the fact that the soldiers fell away from the standard of their forefathers in bodily strength."

Girls had their part to play, too: the *Handbook for Girl Guides* (1912) carries the sub-title "or How Girls can Help Build the Empire." In the event the Scouting movement turned out to be far less warlike than critics feared, far more concerned with Good Deeds and international amity; but with its rituals and jamborees it undoubtedly heightened awareness of the Empire, often in quarters which had been largely untouched by the more sophisticated forms of imperial propaganda literature.

The Boy Scout movement linked, too, with the writings of Kipling. His influence can be felt in the whole notion of the cub-pack – even the terminology is common both to the "Jungle Books" and the Boy Scouts – and even, his biographer suggests, in the Scout Law itself, which has an affinity with the Law of the "Jungle Books." It is an interesting example of the way in which the imperial atmosphere was diffused back and forth until it became part and parcel of the cultural background.

No individual author, however widely read, could hope to compete in influence

with the Press, and the flames of the New Imperialism were above all fanned by the New Journalism, which was an equally striking feature of the 1890s – although here, too, there had been precursors and broad hints of what was to come. The first great penny daily, the *Daily Telegraph*, which in the 1860s had been able to boast the largest circulation in the world, had gradually abandoned its initial Liberalism, and with the Eastern Crisis of 1876, when it looked as though the Russians might be advancing on Constantinople, it changed its allegiance for good and became thoroughly Conservative. Its pundit on policies affecting India was Sir Edwin Arnold, the former Principal of Poona College, a staunch imperialist, who was however best known to the Victorian public as the author of *The Light of Asia*, an epic in blank verse about Buddha. The *Telegraph* also made a speciality of subsidizing expeditions into Darkest Africa – H.M. Stanley, the American explorer and finder of Livingstone, was a regular contributor – while despite its outwardly staid appearance it kept its readers generously supplied with stunts and nine-day-wonders. No paper did more to drum up public excitement at the time of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee of 1887.

By the 1880s the more garish possibilities of popular journalism were also being enlarged by W.T. Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Stead, the son of a Congregationalist minister, combined high-mindedness with prurience and a flair for the sensational that persisted to the end: he died appropriately in the sinking of the *Titanic*. As editor of the *Pall Mall*, which had previously been very much an Establishment paper, "written by gentlemen for gentlemen," he aroused the greatest single rumpus of his career with his series of articles about juvenile prostitution, "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," but personal conviction and editorial astuteness alike led him to promote the imperial cause with no less vigour. He played an important part in building up Cecil Rhodes's reputation as a colossus: "If you could imagine an emperor of old Rome," he wrote, "crossed with one of Cromwell's Ironsides, and the result brought up at the feet of Ignatius Loyola, you would have an amalgam not unlike that which men call Cecil Rhodes. The idea of the State, the Empire, and the supreme allegiance which it has a right to claim from all its subjects, is as fully developed in him as in Augustus or Trajan. But deep underlying all this there is the strong, earnest, religious conception of the Puritan."

Stead also published a famous interview with General Gordon which gave considerable impetus to the train of events that culminated in the General's death at Khartoum in 1885. At the time the personal interview was still enough of a rarity in journalism to be a major news item in itself, but in this case interviewer and interviewee were also extremely well matched: Stead's tones grew vibrant as he described how Gordon had held up a copy of the *Imitation of Christ* and said, "This is my book."

Nor was his influence on the mounting public obsession with Empire limited to his own writing. He also made the *Pall Mall Gazette* a nursery of budding imperialists. One of his editorial assistants was the future Lord Milner, the warmongering High Commissioner of South Africa at the outbreak of the Boer War; another was the formidable Flora Shaw, who as

The practical Christianity of Robert Baden-Powell – "B.P.," hero of Mafeking and founder of the Boy Scouts – provided young people with ideals that many still find of value.

the *Times* correspondent in South Africa was later heavily implicated in the Jameson Raid, an immediate cause of the Boer War, and who ended her days as the wife of Lord Lugard, Governor of Nigeria, a great imperial administrator.

Although Stead and others like him had helped to lay the ground, however, the outstanding single landmark in the rise of mass journalism remains indisputably the founding of the *Daily Mail* by Alfred Harmsworth in 1896. Selling at a halfpenny, proclaiming itself on the front page of every issue as "The Busy Man's Paper," by 1900 the *Mail* had achieved the unprecedented circulation of a million, and its readers were left in no doubt where its political sympathies lay. It stood, Harmsworth wrote, "for the power, supremacy and greatness of the British Empire"; it was above all "the embodiment and mouthpiece of the imperial idea." Here, as nowhere else, the voice of the New Imperialism could be heard in its full brashness. The Diamond Jubilee of 1897 was commemorated in a special number printed throughout in gold ink. (Harmsworth's also marked the occasion with *Sixty Years a Queen*, an illustrated history in ten sixpenny parts which sold 300,000 copies.) The British reconquest of the Sudan was covered by the paper's star correspondent, G.W. Steevens, and Kitchener was put on a pedestal from which a later generation of statesmen found it hard to dislodge him.

But it was the Boer War that called forth the *Mail*'s most spectacular efforts. The special train that it chartered to distribute copies beyond the traditional Home Counties market – yet another Harmsworth innovation – was nicknamed "the South African train," while a characteristic enterprise was the Absent-Minded Beggar Fund for soldiers' families. (It took its name from a poem about the British Tommy by Rudyard Kipling that, in the author's own words, "Sir Arthur Sullivan had wedded to a tune guaranteed to pull teeth out of barrel-organs.")

With the ending of the war, Harmsworth – soon to become Lord Northcliffe – did not allow his zeal for the Empire to slacken. When he started the *Overseas Daily Mail* in 1904 he was less interested, according to his biographers, "in its then slender commercial prospects than in establishing it as 'a bond of empire', a newspaper connection between the mother country 'and the scattered hundreds of thousands of Britons in the far corners of the world'."

Northcliffe's Fleet Street rivals, while they may have lacked his Napoleonic drive, were equally given to displays of Empire loyalty. C. Arthur Pearson, who founded the *Daily Express* in 1900, was an ardent supporter of Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary, who saw to it that the *Express* hammered away incessantly on behalf of Tariff Reform intended to give preference to colonial produce; in 1908 he also launched a paper called the *Standard of Empire* which was to specialize in Empire news and carry Empire advertising. But failing eyesight interfered with his plans, and by 1911

An Unsolicited Testimonial for an Impossible Task

The power of the British Press was never more amply demonstrated than in January, 1884, when the *Pall Mall Gazette* published a dramatic interview with General Charles Gordon that was to have the direst consequences both for him and the country.

Gladstone's decision to abandon the Sudan (a British sphere of influence since the conquest of Egypt in 1882) to the rebel Dervishes and their leader, the Mahdi, sent the *Gazette*'s editor, W.T. Stead, rushing off to find the General. He knew that Gordon, a former Governor of the Sudan, who had done much to reduce the slave-trade in that vast land, would be horrified by the proposed pull-out and abandonment of the 6,000 Egyptian garrison troops there. He planned to splash the General's angry reaction to the withdrawal on the front page of his magazine in an attempt to force the government to undertake an honourable retreat from the Sudan.

Stead tracked Gordon down at his sister's house in Southampton and while the editor reclined on a leopard-skin couch taking copious notes, Gordon, his blue eyes blazing, delivered a masterly analysis of the situation, warning that the Mahdi, if unchecked, could seriously imperil the security of Egypt.

On January 9 the interview appeared in the *Gazette* together with an impassioned editorial urging that Gordon – already famous for his military exploits in China – was the only man who could salvage Britain's sullied reputation in the war-torn Sudan.

The interview and editorial worked brilliantly. The next day newspapers all over Britain printed Gordon's warning and Stead's demands.

To keep the clamour at a fever-pitch Stead continued his campaign in special issues containing unrestrained praise for Gordon. The General, he told his eager readers, combined an iron will with compassion and sympathy for the suffering of others. "In the Sudan," Stead averred, "he was to slave-dealers and other evil-doers an incarnate terror. On his fleet camel, accompanied by only a single guide, he sped from province to province like an angel of wrath descending like a thunderbolt upon all who withstood his will. General Gordon is the natural tribune of the oppressed.

"Notwithstanding his fifty years, his face is almost boyish in its youthfulness, his step is as light and his movements as lithe as the leopard. Although he is still excitable and vehement . . . he has under much firmer control those volcanic fires which blazed out with fiercest fury in his younger days."

Stead exclaimed rapturously that Gordon was "a man of profound piety, passing much of his time in prayer" but also "a fellow of infinite jest and of the merriest humour."

The panegyric had a resounding effect. The government could no longer resist the enormous public demand for Gordon, and towards the end of January he was asked to evacuate the garrisons from the Sudan. Stead little knew that he had helped to send Gordon to his death and embroil Britain in costly Sudanese wars that the government, afraid of further reverses, desperately wanted to avoid.

Variety girls dressed in travesties of naval and military uniforms were a means of exploiting the passion for patriotic themes in the 1880s and 1890s.

another Empire crusader had acquired a large stake in the *Express*: Max Aitken, later Lord Beaverbrook, who adopted a crusader as the *Express*'s symbol.

It would be a mistake to assume, as the Press lords themselves discovered, that the popular Press had a political influence commensurate with its sales. The ruling classes of Edwardian England still paid much closer attention to the papers and periodicals which catered for educated opinion; and at this level, too, the various brands of imperialist thought found their dedicated spokesmen. Above all, there was the voluble J. L. Garvin, editor of the *Observer*, best connected of imperialist leader-writers, and, in his later years, official biographer of Joseph Chamberlain. The public served by such men was the one which counted politically, and also one which tended to look askance at the antics of the new popular Press.

In this respect as in others, imperialism, far from being a monolithic movement, covered a wide range of interests and attitudes. Ironically, it was the Prime Minister who presided over affairs at the very height of *fin de siècle* imperialism, Lord Salisbury, who dismissed the *Daily Mail*, with a backward glance at the gentlemanly days of the original *Pall Mall Gazette*, as a paper "written by office-boys for office-boys."

Another element in the popular, turn-of-the-century imperialist feeling was provided by the music-halls. Besides the "jingo" songs, there were innumerable others about sons of the sea and soldiers of the Queen, and countless "descriptive vocalists" who kept alive the legends of Lucknow. The most celebrated of the variety theatres, which opened in the 1880s, was named "The Empire." One popular performer, Leo Dryden, was known as "the Kipling of the Halls" on

account of his colonial-cum-patriotic numbers such as "The Great White Mother" and "The Gallant Gordon Highlanders." And the Boer War naturally produced a spate of topical songs – "For England's Bit of Bunting," "The Boers Have Got My Daddy," and dozens of others like them.

Stories, poems, the Press, songs: all no doubt had a cumulative effect, as did the constant succession of melodramas built round a Queen-and-Country theme. But a note of caution is necessary before concluding that large sections of the populace were in the grip of an unprecendented chauvinism. The whole question of whether or not imperialism had a genuine mass following remains a vexed one. It is hard to say how much influence all the publicity had in practice, or to what extent this is a question of momentary enthusiasms as against rooted convictions. But one thing is reasonably clear: the *Daily Mail* public should not be identified with the working class. The typical *Mail* reader was far more likely to be a clerk or a small shopkeeper than an industrial worker, while when we consider imperialist sentiment as a whole it is worth bearing in mind George Orwell's comment that "'What Have I done for You, England, my England?' is essentially a middle-class query; almost any working man would follow it up with 'What has England done for Me?'"

This is not quite the whole story, as Orwell himself conceded. Working-class patriotism is a powerful enough emotion, especially in wartime, and once the Boer War had started there were widespread outbursts of enthusiasm among rich and poor alike. But there is at least as much evidence of working-class dissatisfaction with the war, and apart from a number of sectional interests, such as the seamen and shipbuilding workers, organized labour was firmly on the side of the anti-imperialists. Nothing has come to light so far to support Lenin's contention that the upper stratum of the working class had been politically corrupted by the opium of imperial expansion.

As far as the music-halls are concerned, there was nothing new about the link between imperial ardour and popular entertainment, nothing which could not have been matched earlier in the 19th

Songs of Hope and Glory

A selection of music-hall numbers recalls imperial themes popular around the turn of the century.

"By Jingo!"

This famous song of 1878 created a new word – "jingoism" – for patriotic defiance in the face of foreign threats to Britain's imperial greatness. The threat in 1878 came from Russia, which as the second verse and chorus made clear, had designs on Britain's route to India.

As peacemaker old England her very utmost tried
The Russians said they wanted peace but then those Russians lied
Of carnage and of trickery they'll have sufficient feast
Ere they dare to think of coming near our road unto the east.
So we're waiting for the signal, directly up it runs

Clear the decks for action, stand by the guns;
Our army and our navy, true British dogs of war,
Will make them cry "peccavi" [I have sinned] same as they did before.

We don't want to fight,
But by jingo if we do
We've got the ships, we've got the men
And got the money too.
We've fought the Bear before
And while we're Britons true
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.

"Another Little Patch of Red"

The second verse and the chorus from an expansionist song of about 1898 offer a maudlin justification for the preservation of Empire.

This John Bull is now a mighty chap, boys
At the world his fingers he can snap, boys
Eastward – westward – you may turn your head
There you'll see the giant trail of red
Dyed with the blood of England's bravest sons
Bought with their lives – now guarded by her guns
Red is the colour of our Empire laid
England will see the tint shall never fade.

For of pluck he's brimming full
Is young John Bull
And he's happy when we let him have his head
It's a feather in his cap
When he's helped to paint the map
With another little patch of red.

A Sentimental Melody

"The Miner's Dream of Home," an Australian's sigh for the old country, was music-hall singer Leo Dryden's hit of the 1890s and popular with soldiers in the Boer War. The first verse sets the mood.

It is ten weary years since I left England's shore
In a far distant country to roam
How I long to return to my own native land
To my friends and the old folks at home.
Last night as I slumbered I had a strange dream
One that seemed to bring distant friends near
I dreamt of old England the land of my birth
To the heart of her sons ever dear.

Righteous Indignation

Two verses from "That's How We've Made Our Name" (1898) express the Victorian belief in the moral rightness of British rule.

On every side we see
The proof of Britain's might
Where're her flag may be
There freedom claims her right
Some think thro' wealth and power that we
Gain victory by land and sea
But justice and humanity
Are the arms with which we fight.

We All Stand Together

Courage and Empire solidarity are the topics in "A Pattern to the World," published in 1898.

Brave hearts everywhere, proud of the flag they are under
Ready to face the common foe
What though enemies' guns volley and volley and thunder
Fear is the word they do not know;
Some say the glories of the olden days
Never more shall be
We'll take it as a joke and when the ravens croak
Refer them to our brothers o'er the sea
Our brave Colonial boys across the sea.

Boer War Grit

"The Boers Have Got My Daddy," a tale of a true-blue Briton, was popular at home in 1900.

This morning in a busy street
A tiny lad I spied
With paper hat and little wooden
Sword slung by his side
Said I "Good morning, gen'ral"
In a playful sort of way
"I see by your appearance you're
Preparing for the fray."
He stood up to attention
Looked at me with flashing eye
Then gripped his little wooden sword
As he made this reply

The Boers have got my Daddy
My soldier Dad
I don't like to hear my Mammy sigh
I don't like to see my Mammy cry
So I'm a-going in a big ship
Across the raging main
And I'm a-going to fight the Boers, I am,
And bring my Daddy home again!

I smiled down at the youngster, though
A lump came in my throat
And marvelled at the pluck beneath
That little ragged coat,
To hear the way that kiddy talked
It really was sublime
But – there you are! the old, old tale –
A Briton all the time!
Said he, "I've wrote to General Bobs
To join his gallant band –
I'll pay the naughty Boers for keeping
Daddy when I land!"

Century, for instance, by the patriotic spectacles – the siege of Gibraltar, the Burmese War, and so forth – staged at Astley's Royal Amphitheatre. Secondly, the leading West End theatres were patronized by young bloods and men about town rather than plebeians. And, most significant of all, in the music-hall as a whole the jingo element counted for very little in comparison with comedy, sentiment and burlesque. None of the really top-rank stars were specifically associated with patriotic numbers, and even those singers who were often put the emphasis on pathos or nostalgia. Leo Dryden scored his greatest success with "The Miner's Dream of Home"; the most popular of the Boer War songs was "Good-bye, Dolly Gray."

Yet if the immediate political significance of the halls has often been exaggerated, they undeniably contributed to the atmosphere in which imperialism flourished. For most Englishmen, in fact, imperialism was something in the air rather than a systematic set of beliefs, and the Empire was not so much a direct concern as part of the general décor against which they lived their everyday lives. They might be reminded of it at any time in a hundred different ways – by a street name, a pub sign, a piece of slang, a travel poster, a war memorial, a box of toy soldiers, the achievements of tropical medicine, the fashion for ostrich feathers or cashmere shawls, the kind of gaudy bric-à-brac which can still be found in the dustier corners of any antique shop. Schoolboys learned the finer points of imperial geography from stamp-collecting; Piccadilly Circus was the "Hub of the Empire"; in some quarters, Elgar's tune for A.C. Benson's *Land of Hope and Glory*, with its promise of limitless expansion ("Wider still and wider shall thy bounds be set . . .") virtually assumed the status of a second national anthem. Advertisers in particular exploited imperial motifs for all they were worth, especially during the Boer War. As one writer has put it, "the War might have been won earlier, it would appear from the advertisements, if soldiers had spent less time standing on *kopjes* waving packets of cigarettes in the air or marching up to exposed positions under enormous Union Jacks superimposed with the names of meat extracts."

An equally potent force in keeping up awareness of the Empire was sport. The Ashes did more to make Englishmen feel a kinship with Australians than all the efforts of the imperial federationists. Rugger, especially after the sensational All Blacks tour of 1905, represented a major link with New Zealand. (A Maori XV had come over nearly 20 years earlier.) And no other Indian name meant as much in Edwardian England as that of the prince of batsmen, Ranjitsinhji.

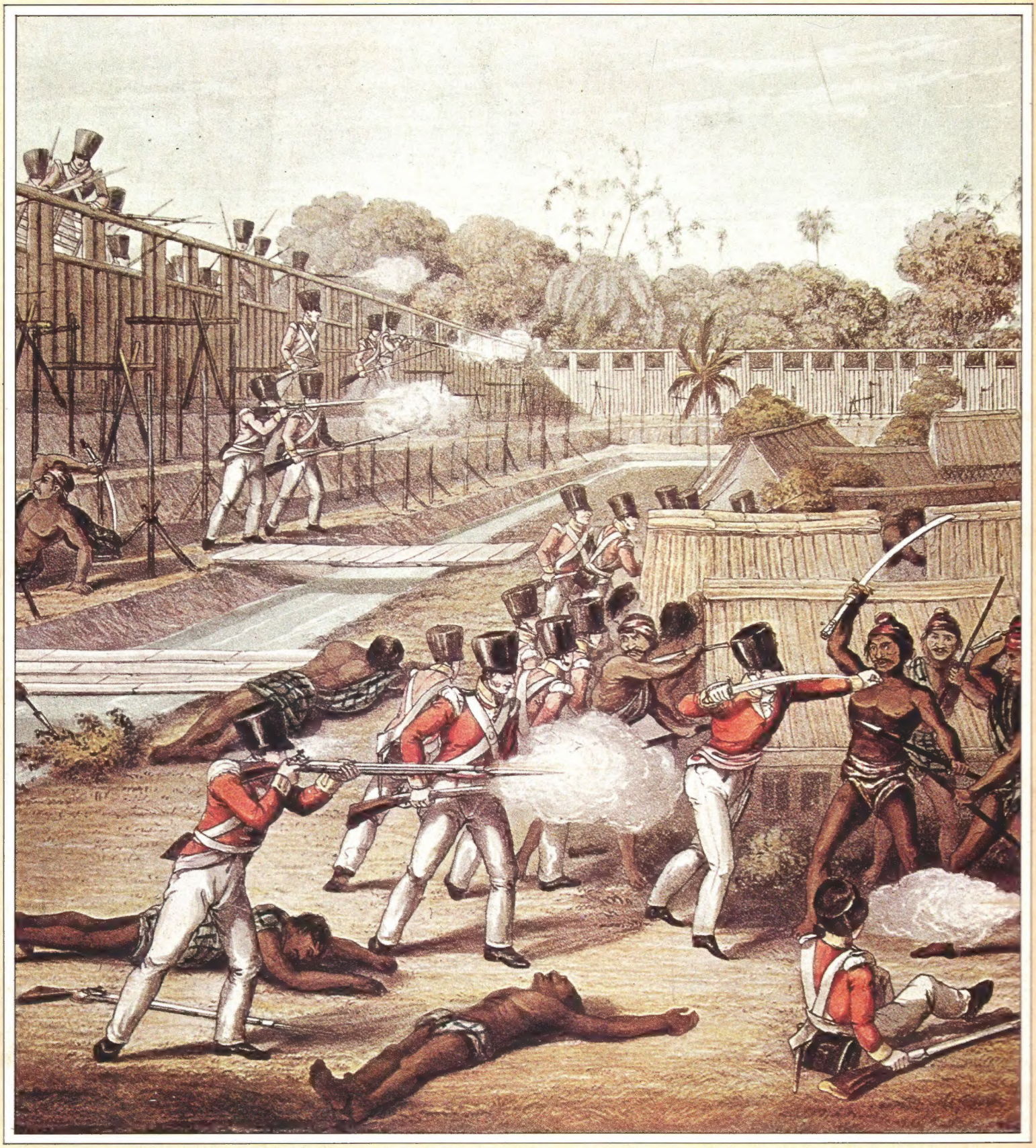
Some of these reminders of Empire were explicit, others indirect or vague; but all of them reinforced a sense of exotic grandeur and power. There were also the more formal pressures exerted by official bodies, public institutions and political ginger-groups. The Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 had led on to the opening of the Imperial Institute in South Kensington two years later; at the same time the newly formed Primrose League was busy stirring the imperial cauldron. Other organizations, such as the Overseas Club and the predominantly female Victoria League, sprang up in the early years of the 20th Century, a period that also saw the long-drawn-out campaign to establish an official Empire Day, which was conducted with single-minded tenacity by the Earl of Meath (who had retired from the Diplomatic Service back in 1872) and which finally bore fruit in 1916. At a more intellectually austere level, in 1910 the former members of Lord Milner's Kindergarten – as his protégés of South African days were known – set up their own periodical, *The Round Table*, which became the focal point of their not-very-effective attempts to influence policy from behind the scenes; they also held regular private gatherings or "moots" at which they deliberated strenuously on imperial affairs.

From *The Round Table* to the music-halls is as far a cry as from Seeley to Northcliffe, or from Newbolt to C.H. Pearson. The imperial mood of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain defies easy generalizations: it was compounded of many factors, among them earnestness and frivolity, greed and self-sacrifice, complacency and instability. Much of what passed for an imperial mystique was rationalization or whitewash, yet without a mystique there might well have been less willingness to recognize that power entailed responsibility, and the Empire would probably have been a harsher place than it was. In either event, however, the First World War broke the spell; and by the 1920s, the flowing, imposing poetry of Empire was turning irrevocably to stilted, outworn prose.

Sentimental covers for two popular songs recall one way in which Empire acted as a widespread – though superficial – backdrop to London life towards the turn of the century.

Afternoon dress for summer, 1888

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE



ENLARGING THE JEWEL
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